

Fact Sheet #2: College/School Collaboration for Post-secondary Success



By Maria Paiewonsky, Sherri Elander, Jerri Roach, and Ty Hanson

The success of inclusive concurrent enrollment (ICE) initiatives depends on productive relationships between college and school partners, as well as other people they invite to join them. An important component of these relationships is understanding each member's role and responsibilities.

College liaison role and responsibilities

The institute of higher education (IHE) implementation specialist, often referred to as the college liaison, communicates with college administrators and staff about the ICE initiative. This person also coordinates with school staff, families, and students. Here are more details about these activities:

Communicate with the college community about the ICE initiative.

The college liaison is the primary person responsible for communicating information about the ICE initiative to key college staff. The liaison shares news and updates about the initiative, and may be responsible for articulating to the college a long-term plan for supporting students with intellectual disabilities.

Collaborate with college staff.

The college liaison is responsible for working with IHE colleagues who will be providing services to students supported by ICE. Typical services students need to access are registration, disability services, financial aid, student activities, and student affairs. The college liaison assures that there is constant communication with the person who runs each of these offices about including the students from the ICE partnership and discussing any specific accommodations a student might need to access these services.

Discuss differences between high school and college.

The college liaison explains differences between high school and college to students, parents, transition specialists, and high school liaisons. This includes the differences students will experience in learning accommodations, class schedules, and expectations of college instructors and disability services staff.

See Fact Sheet #3 for more about differences between high school and college for students with disabilities.

Communicate with faculty.

College liaisons communicate with faculty about the ICE initiative. They also offer faculty trainings on universal course design applications, often in collaboration with disability services staff.

The college liaison is also usually the person who approaches faculty to discuss a student's interest in taking a course. The liaison is prepared to explain aspects of supported education that may help the student to succeed in the class.

Maintain ongoing planning and communication with ICE partners.

College liaisons facilitate partnership meetings on a monthly basis for the first two years while the program is being piloted, and then meet at least quarterly. At these meetings, partners often establish a memorandum of agreement to define their roles and responsibilities, as well as an agreed-upon timeline.

The college liaison also uses these meetings to review procedures and timelines for student advising, course registration, the semester calendar, and any campus events that may be of interest to the students. Some time is used to align school and college schedules with the school partners.

Organize strategic planning.

The college liaison may host one or two longer partnership meetings for strategic planning. At these meetings, the group determines what resources the partnership has to support students, and identifies outstanding challenges.

With this information, the members then establish goals for their partnership to grow. These goals might include professional development, cost-sharing strategies, and outreach efforts to the college, school, and community.

High school liaison role and responsibilities

The high school liaison promotes ICE as a community-based transition service to secondary staff, students, and families.

Prepare secondary staff

The high school liaison works closely with the school district's special education coordinator. With the coordinator's support, the liaison presents college for students with severe disabilities as a postsecondary option to the secondary staff.

The liaison also advocates for students to prepare for college by having increased opportunities to:

- Access general education courses
- Learn and practice self-determination skills
- Discuss their disability and accommodation needs
- Travel independently
- Develop emotional health and maturity
- Develop safety skills

Prepare students.

The high school liaison is often the first person to introduce college as a postsecondary option to students with severe disabilities. There are a number of steps liaisons can take to discuss college with these students:

- Asking students and families if they can attend IEP meetings to discuss this new postsecondary education option
- Co-facilitating person-centered planning with a college partner to see if college would support a student's career vision
- Talking to students about the differences between high school and college expectations
- Making arrangements to visit the college and take a tour
- Preparing students for initial meetings with disability services
- Reviewing the expectations and responsibilities of college students

Prepare families.

The high school liaison meets with families, either at IEP meetings or outside of school, to introduce them to college as a postsecondary option for their son or daughter. In these meetings, the liaison explains:

- College as a postsecondary option for students with severe disabilities with the right supports
- High school versus college expectations for all students, including those with disabilities
- The changing role of families and what families can do to promote their son or daughter's growing independence
- Community-based instruction and its impact on postsecondary outcomes
- Mobility and travel training
- Preparing for safety and calculated risk-taking
- Flexible schedules that resemble those of peers without disabilities

Tips for college liaisons

- Communicate with school partners regularly.
- Help high school liaisons set up times for students to visit the college.
- Hold regularly scheduled partnership meetings to share the program's goals and successes with key college personnel. Be aware of all college personnel who directly or indirectly support students in the initiative, acknowledge their assistance, and communicate with them frequently.
- Develop and submit a five-year vision statement and five-year goals to the college's committee for long-range planning.
- Keep data on student course enrollment and student schedules.
- Gather and share information on the type and frequency of training and support provided to faculty.

Tips for high school liaisons

- Prepare students for transition and promote development of self-determination skills.
- Develop a postsecondary/transition coordinator position to coordinate this work at the high school level.
- Change instructional assistant positions into transition or educational coach positions to support students at college.
- Implement person-centered planning and revisit it on a yearly basis.
- Prepare students, staff, and families for differences between high school and college.
- Establish an agreed-upon communication system with the college liaison.
- Use student-coach agreements to help students learn to direct their own supports at college.

Successful ICE partnerships rely on ongoing collaboration and communication and a mutual vision. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of each partner promotes a seamless transition from high school to college.

ⁱ Maria Paiewonsky, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Sheri Elander, Westfield Public Schools; Jerri Roach, Worcester Public Schools; Ty Hanson, Holyoke Community College.

